

March 19, 1999

Laurie E. Boyden Receives Cornell's 1998 Perrine Scholarship

by Linda McCandless

GENEVA,
NY: Laurie
E.
Boyden's
on-going
efforts in
Cornell



(left to right) Hugh Price, NYSAES horticultural sciences chairman, Susan Brown, director of the Station's apple breeding program, and Director Jim Hunter (far right), awarded Laurie Boyden (third from left) the 1998 Perrine Scholarship.

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University's pomology program were recognized by Hugh Price, chairman of the Department of Horticultural Sciences at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, when he presented her with the 1998 Perrine Scholarship Award on February 22, 1999.

Boyden is the fourth recipient of the award which was established by David Perrine (Cornell '22) in 1993 to support pomology research work at Geneva. The \$2000 Perrine Scholarship award is credited to the research account of the student's thesis advisor with the stipulation that it be used to support the student's research program.

Jim Hunter, Director of the Experiment Station, congratulated Boyden, noting that "we need a new generation of scientists to breed new apples to help the fruit industry competitive and keep consumers

interested in eating more apples."

Susan Brown, director of the Station's apple breeding program, noted that the award was appropriate because the Perrine family was very interested in "fruit quality" and "breeding" which are Boyden's primary interests.

Boyden, a first-year graduate student, is pursuing a Master's/Ph.D. degree in Pomology at Cornell. She will be performing research with Susan Brown on characterizing germplasm for quality attributes in conjunction with disease resistance.

"Some of the characteristics associated with fruit quality that we will be looking for include astringency, the acidity to sugar ration, juiciness and texture," said Boyden. The disease she is targeting is apple scab. Boyden expects to start her thesis research in Geneva this summer.

Boyden grew up in Granby, Connecticut, and graduated from the University of Connecticut in Storrs, in 1997, with a B.S., having majored in Horticulture. She first became interested in plant breeding in seventh grade when she read a series of mystery novels where the amateur sleuth was a professor of horticulture. Boyden was enamored by the descriptions of his work-which included inventing a new breed of rutabaga-and has been interested in courses in fruit and vegetable culture ever since. "I have had my own kitchen garden since I've been ambitious enough to tend one," she said, "helping my mother with her mammoth vegetable and strawberry patches, and poring over seed catalogs." Now, Boyden would like to be the person creating the best cultivars, manipulating characteristics of fruit yield and quality as well as the ornamental aspects.

Who were the Perrines?

Perrine was a prominent orchardist from Centralia, Illinois. He established the generous gift in memory of his wife, Fanny French Perrine, whom he met and fell in love with while at Cornell in the 1920s. At the time, Fanny was a student in bacteriology and David a student in pomology. Fanny, who was frequently called "Superwoman" by her family, ran many of the farm's activities and was deeply involved in community activities.

David and his brother, Alden (Cornell '47), were partners in the Perrine Orchard, farming 600 acres of peaches, apples, and pears. Jim Cummins, professor emeritus of horticultural sciences at Geneva, who has known and admired the Perrine family for many years, said David

was the "best fruit grower in the Midwest." He had a long and distinguished career as an apple and peach grower, and was a leader in the fruit industry. He was president of the National Peach Council, a member of the National Apple Institute, and president of the Illinois State Horticultural Society. He died in 1996.

Cummins first met the Perrines after World War II, when he served as a field agent for F.H. Simpson Co., the fruit broker who handled the Perrine apple and peach crops. "I served around 100 fruit-packing houses that summer of 1946, and it was always an exciting relief to turn to the Perrines-the Perrine fruit was always a perfection, maturity just right, trunk loading on time, perhaps the only 'honest pack' on my circuit," said Cummins.

The Perrines were instrumental in Cummins continuing his studies in pomology at Cornell after he finished his undergraduate course work at the University of Illinois. The families maintained a close friendship throughout the years.

"Dave continued to be active in dwarf fruit tree experimentation even when he was in his 90s," said Cummins, who noted he had 50 trees in his "back 40" up until his death. Rootstocks also held a special fascination for Dave, and Cummins credits him for using 'Hibernal' and 'Virginia Crab' stocks on a commercial basis long before the industry was taking them seriously.

The scholarship has already helped launch the promising careers of three young horticulturists. In 1994, the first year it was awarded, the Perrine Scholarship was given to Patrick Conner, a doctoral student in pomology whose research with Susan Brown focused on the genetic mapping of apples and the identification of certain sequences in the apple genome that determine traits, such as size, flavor, and color. Conner is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia. In 1995, Thomas E. Clark received the award while he was pursuing a master's degree at Cornell, and working with Terence Robinson. Clark is currently employed as an extension educator by the Lake Ontario Fruit Team, and works out of the Niagara County office. In 1996, Chris Owens received the award. He worked with Ed Stover on two projects in plant growth regulators at the Hudson Valley Lab, and is currently pursuing his Ph.D at Michigan State.

NOTE TO EDITORS: If you need a hard copy of the photo, please contact Rob Way at 315-787-2357, or at rfw2@cornell.edu
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